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BROADCASTERS VICTORY COUNCIL

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Number 32

September 10, 1942.

RIGHT STEP, RIGHT DIRECTION **

This week the Office of War Information comes forward with a manifesto that makes its position in the realm of government radio a lot more positive. Dubbed "OWI Regulation No. 2", over the signature of Elmer Davis, it states with simple comma-less dispatch that "all plans or proposals for new or continuing series or for individual radio programs developed by or for the national headquarters of the several Government Agencies for local stations or networks will be submitted to the Chief of the Radio Bureau, OWI, for clearance."

The object of this move should be apparent to any program director who's arrived at his office of a cheery morning and found that the mailman has deposited a variegated ton of requested spot announcements, mimeographed scripts, sundry transcriptions, and other aspirant radio material on top of his battered "incoming" basket. This, in the past, has been productive of some fine confusion. And although more and more of the material was cleared through the OWI, a difficult share still cut the corners and went to stations direct.

Regulation No. 2 is divided into four parts. The first deals with "New Radio Programs Proposed by Headquarters of Government Agencies." The second covers "Government Material Supplied by National Headquarters to Established Radio Programs." The third is "Government Radio Programs Now on the Air, Produced by or for National Headquarters." And fourth comes "Radio Activities of Government Field Offices."

In other, blunter words, everything relating to government war work and the war messages it wants radio to handle must henceforth pass through the OWI, as of October 1. This means taking quite a load off individual stations and networks. It means a sharp check on duplication, contradiction and misplaced emphasis. It means that the industry will receive a balanced, pre-planned number of requests for air-time, with less danger of disrupting the general pattern of broadcasting on which the public depends for entertainment as well as information.

We think it's a good idea. It's a tightening of authority that's long been needed and anticipated. And it promises a closer, more productive co-operation between our war government and the industry.

Copies of OWI Regulation No. 2 were mailed out yesterday to all stations. If yours hasn't arrived yet, it'll be along in a day or so.

OWI CHANGES ITS SPOTS **

Incidentally - speaking of the OWI - there was a change made this week in the original plan of United Nations spot announcements (BVC Newsletter #30) which called for airing ten one-minute spots each day for

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six weeks.

The daily quota being requested has now been lowered to six. This move follows a reaction of the part of some stations that - although they'd like to co-operate - the large number of announcements meant pushing other important war messages out of the daily schedule. Furthermore, a number of urgent campaigns have come up, including the fuel conservation drive, which make it advisable to reduce the scheduling.

The OWI has asked the BVC to point out that in cities where two or more stations operate there should be some kind of mutual arrangement arrived at whereby the same announcements are not used by all stations on the same days. It does little more than annoy a listener when he hears the identical one-minute routine about the brave British at four different points on the dial within the same half hour. In fact he might even turn off his set, motivated by the same reasoning that makes you get up and go home from the movies when the stuff on the screen gets around to the part where you came in.

DON'T DILLY-DALLY ON THIS ONE **

The cold breath of winter is blowing on the complacent necks of the American people, whether they realize it or not. Radio is being asked to wise them up to this fact. As long ago as last Spring a few clarion voices rang out on the kilocycles, urging homeowners who burn coal in their basement furnaces to stock up. Then came the suggestion that maybe it would be smart if they changed their oil-burners over to coal because anyone with half a grasp of the situation could see fuel oil was bound to be a rare commodity this coming winter.

The campaign has now built up into a major venture. Stations all over the country are to be enlisted in a nationwide fuel conservation drive, urging radio listeners to do four separate and important things. Two of them must be attended to now - namely, conversion of oil-burning heaters to coal, wherever possible; and preparation of homes for winter weather by means of storm doors and windows, weather-stripping, etc. Consumer credit restrictions have been waived on such repairs, and the FHA will make loans up to \$2,500 for homeowners who want to convert and/or make their houses "heat-tight". Radio is being asked to play up all this during the last two weeks of September.

WHEN COLDER WEATHER COMES **

In October the campaign broadens out to cover information on ways of conserving fuel after the heating season has started. This includes closing off unnecessary rooms, keeping temperatures at a minimum, and a flock of other clinical but helpful suggestions. Final point is rationing of fuel oil, which will be an actuality along the Eastern Seaboard and many middle Western states this winter.

Although the rationing areas, right at the moment, aren't too well defined, stations should keep in touch with local OPA offices to find out whether their listeners will be faced with fuel oil rationing or not. If so, an early effort is desirable to see that provisions of the rationing system are clearly understood by all.

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The OWI is sending out radio background material on the entire fuel conservation problem which will soon be in your hands. The subject calls for earnest co-operation. It's the first thing that really threatens to bring this war home to the domestic scene. Sugar and gasoline rationing have been little more than inconveniences, but the fuel shortage (which isn't a shortage of fuel at all, but of transportation to move it) strikes close to the welfare and health of the American people. Without adequate heat this winter, we face widespread illness, possible epidemics, and a reduced efficiency in our war factories. Unless oil is distributed equitably to everyone who needs it - by a process of rationing - some people are going to freeze while others bask in comfort. And that's no way to win a war.

NASHVILLE DOES A JOB **

We received a first-rate letter the other day from F. C. Sowell, who's general manager of WLAC in Nashville. WLAC went after this business of selling War Bonds with an aplomb and promotional popper that merits plenty of applause. We strongly suspect that - on the basis of results achieved - they're getting just that from the Treasury Department.

It was a long letter, so we'll sift out the pertinent facts for you. First of all, WLAC faced the Bond selling enterprise with a philosophy that here's a big proposition and one that must be conducted on a big scale. It called for shooting the works.

The first shot consisted in going to a leading Nashville department store and requesting the use of a conspicuous show window as a Bond booth. Permission was granted. Second step was to call together the directors of Nashville's six top civic clubs. Each group agreed to assume responsibility for sales at the booth one day each week, for four weeks. The sales personnel was to be chosen by the individual clubs from the city's most beautiful girls.

Things opened auspiciously August 17, with the mayor of Nashville doing the official opening on a dedicatory program aired over WLAC. There were a lot of other angles set up, like prizes for the girls selling the most War Bonds, and attention-building stunts by various clubs to attract publicity.

What impressed us, however, was that WLAC started out with an optimistic goal of selling \$100,000 worth of Bonds in four weeks. The first order to the Treasury for blank Bonds - just to play safe - was for only half that figure. The nearest Federal Reserve Bank, playing even safer, would issue only \$22,500 worth.

At the end of the first week, the WLAC-instigated campaign had brought in \$71,186.95. The goal was therefore upped to \$250,000. At the end of the second week, sales amounted to \$223,000. After a few days more, it passed \$275,000. At the time Mr. Sowell wrote us, they were gunning at the half-million mark. "Interest in our campaign," he declared, "is kept at a high level through twice-daily broadcasts from the booth, and a complete report on each day's final sales on our 10 p.m. newscast."

"So far as we have been able to determine," adds Mr. Sowell, "this is

the first occasion in local history when all the civic clubs have actively worked together to put over a single promotional scheme. This friendly spirit of co-operation has struck a responsive chord with the entire Nashville population, and much good - in addition to the sale of War Bonds - undoubtedly will accrue from it.

"I can see no reason why this same plan could not be employed with just as much success by radio stations in every major city in the United States."

We pass the idea along for your attention. Sounds like WLAC has something there - besides a few hundred thousand dollars for Uncle Sam.

AS WE SAID BEFORE **

We don't like to get crusty about these things - particularly since the pointing out of War Censorship Code violations has become something of a pernicious pastime with us during the past few weeks. But violations keep happening. Not only do people say things they shouldn't, but they say things in ways that can leave a lingering bad taste in the listener's mouth. They hurt radio. They weaken the faith that's being put in us as the war's fastest, most thorough medium of mass communication. They just don't sound grown-up.

There's a commentator on one of the networks. A good enough commentator, judging by his audience ratings. He's vitally interested in helping America win the war. He also likes his sponsor. The transition between the two departments is sometimes a wee bit breathless.

We shudder at what people think when they hear a respected voice on the air go lickety-whizz from a report of American battle-front casualties to a jingle-jangle song and dance about how in these difficult times it's important to keep up one's personal appearance by using the sponsor's fine product.

It just sounds bad. Furthermore, under the Code there should be no tie-up between the news and the commercial. Even as remote a one as indicated above. Today's the time to think twice about everything you do. When in doubt, don't say it! That's the same old refrain we've been humming over since BVC newsletter #1 - but it's still smart music. And you'd do well to keep in tune.

WE SUGGEST PATIENCE **

A little while ago (BVC Newsletter #30) we told you about the five million new OCD booklets called "What Can I Do" that radio is being asked to help get scattered throughout the nation. We were informed that shipments had been sent to civilian defense councils in almost all towns and would be ready for distribution after September 1.

We've had a few snap-trigger letters from stations who seem irked because their local councils didn't have the booklets right on tap at the opening of the business day, September 1. Patience, bud. This is a big country. It takes time to get things around, particularly today when transportation has so many jobs to do that it can't even get a full breath.

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The OCD booklets have been sent to most places. So many places that the supply's sinking low. Those that they haven't reached yet will get them soon. We suggested before - we suggest it again....ask your local civilian defense council about "What Can I Do". When it's available locally, the OCD will appreciate your help.

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Nos. 1-36. 1942.

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